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Mediating the role of employee willingness to perform between career choice and employee effectiveness (case study in public sector universities of Pakistan)

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This study aims to explore the mediating role of employee willingness to perform (EWP) in the public sector universities of Pakistan, as well as the factors affecting employee effectiveness. Afterwards, a relationship is proposed on the basis of previous literature and theories. Furthermore, the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) explains the mediating effect between EWP, CC, and EE. This study also includes a synthesis of the contextual factors affecting EE.

Key words: *Employee willingness to perform, employee effectiveness, career choice, TPB, public sector universities, Pakistan.*

Introduction

The quality of education has a unique and significant importance in the development of any society, as well as its intellectual or human capital (Bodla, Hussain, & Chen, 2014; Qazi, Raza, & Jawaed, 2014). This is the era of competitiveness, where human capital (employees) is a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Qazi et al., 2014). Furthermore, the competitiveness and effectiveness of the education sector depends on the effectiveness and performance of its employees (academicians) (Bodla et al., 2014). Educational institutions are said to be effective when the academicians are effective, as argued by (Saetang, Sulumnad, Thampitak, & Sungkaew, 2010). Hence, it could be said that to make the education sector effective, one first needs to make the academicians effective. The main focus of this study is

to highlight the important factors that are the main cause of the ineffectiveness of academicians in the Higher Educational Institutions (HEI) of Pakistan.

Pakistan's education sector has been suffering persistently (Bodla et al., 2014; Chaudhry, 2018; Herani, Mugheri, & Advani, 2015; Kayani, Ahmed, & Shah, 2015; Qazi et al., 2014; Rasheed, Aslam, Yousaf, & Noor, 2011) and a number of researchers found that academicians are not effective in the public HEIs of Pakistan (Amin Ahmed, 2014; Aziz et al., 2014; Farid et al., 2015; Khan, 2016; B. R. Kumar, 2013; Roof, 2015; A. Shahzad, Valcke, Tondeur, & Zulfqar, 2016). There are several factors (e.g. career choice, Islamic work ethics, human capital development, and employee willingness to perform) behind the ineffectiveness of academicians in public HEIs (Sajid & Shaheen, 2013; Shaheen, Sajid, & Batool, 2013). Once these factors are correctly handled, academicians can work effectively, and the HEIs will grow rapidly in Pakistan. The major factors behind the ineffectiveness of academicians are discussed individually in the following section.

A review of the extensive literature highlighted career choice (CC) and employee willingness to perform (WTP) as the most important factors behind the ineffectiveness of academicians in the public sector universities of Pakistan (Alam, 2015; Parvez & Shakir, 2013; Reh, 2018; Rehmani, 2006; Roof, 2015; M. N. Shahzad, Zahra, & Ahmed, 2014). The first major and significant factor behind the ineffectiveness of academicians is career choice. There are two possibilities in career choice: a career chosen or a career forced. A detailed discussion on career by force is provided in the literature section. One who chooses the teaching profession willingly will love to teach effectively (Chakraborty & Mondal, 2014); however, in Pakistan, teaching is not a profession by choice Archivist (2016), which leads to the ineffectiveness of academicians (Roof, 2015). Thus, it could be said that to make the academicians effective, they must choose the teaching profession rather than be forced into it.

Unfortunately, in Pakistan, individuals mostly join the teaching profession only when they have failed to find any other job (Alam, 2015; Parvez & Shakir, 2013; Reh, 2018; Rehmani, 2006; M. N. Shahzad et al., 2014). An incorrect or forced career choice contributes to the ineffectiveness of academicians in the Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) of Pakistan (Roof, 2015). By reviewing extensive literature, it was found that there is a need to study career choice to make academicians effective, as was suggested by a number of other researchers (like: (Aftab Ahmed, 2014; Qureshi, Janjua, Zaman, Lodhi, & Tariq, 2014; Sarwar & Azmat, 2013; M. N. Shahzad et al., 2014). Hence, to fill this gap, it is necessary to conduct a study on the career choices of academicians.

Furthermore, numerous researchers found that employee willingness to perform (EWP) is important for employee effectiveness Srithongrung (2011) and increases their performance (Mowday, Porter, & Dubin, 1974; Srithongrung, 2011). Hence, once an academician has

voluntarily chosen the teaching profession, they perform it willingly and effectively (Chakraborty & Mondal, 2014; Srithongrung, 2011). Thus, EWP significantly mediates between career choice and employee effectiveness.

Literature Review

Employee Effectiveness

Employee performance that contributes to organizational goals is called effectiveness (Rastogi & Dave, 2004). Effectiveness is considered as the degree or level to which an employee accomplishes organizational objectives (Ghorbani, Alilou, & Noubari, 2012). However, it could be said that when performance reaches its peak, it will translate into effectiveness. When common competencies among different people combine and each is assigned organizational tasks, there is collective effectiveness (Zaccaro, Blair, Peterson, & Zazanis, 1995).

Variables like job stress, job satisfaction, intention to leave, and many others need to be considered in the study of employee effectiveness, and effectiveness has previously been used as a dependent variable (Chen, 2004; Gholipour, 2007; Thompson & Vecchio, 2009). According to Weiss (2002), the propensity for a person to love his/her job is called job satisfaction; the efforts and positive behaviours of employees to accomplish organizational objectives is called job performance (Campbell, 1999); and the intention to permanently quit an organization is referred to as intention to leave, which causes physiological and psychological withdrawal. Lack of tendency in the employees of an organization disturbs the continuity of organizational tasks and creates despair and a lack of motivation in others. It can influence job satisfaction, effectiveness, and efficiency, and its opposite point is the intention to stay in the organization (Campion, Cheraskin, & Stevens, 1994). Hence, employee effectiveness has a positive relationship with job performance and satisfaction, and it could be said that a higher level of job performance equates to effectiveness.

According to Bandura (1977), self-effectiveness is the belief of employees that their abilities are necessary to success. Self-effectiveness enhances an employee's willingness to perform, which means that they, especially at an individual level, can easily accomplish their targets. Self-effectiveness also helps develop occupational skills, improve performance learning Hill et al., (1987), and increase employee satisfaction (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Some researchers suggest that effectiveness is a predictor of an employee's occupational perspectives and job performance. It has also been observed that self-effectiveness has a positive influence on performance and motivation, both at an individual and a group level (collective effectiveness) (Bandura, 1977).

By focusing on the effectiveness of employees who are accomplishing various tasks in an organization, Wright, McMahan, Snell and Gerhart (2001) adopted the HRM effectiveness measurement. The role of an employee's effectiveness is obtained through the tincture of the roles proposed by Ulrich (1997). Employee effectiveness is associated with organizational outcomes and could be evaluated through an employee's outcomes (Baron & Kreps, 1999; Boxall, 1996; Huselid, 1995b; Ruel, Bondarouk, & Van der Velde, 2007; Wright et al., 2001, as cited in Sulochana & Sajeewanie, 2015).

Career Choice

Career choice means the possibility of getting a job that persists for a long period of time. Employment opportunities are also called career choices, and they help individuals to achieve their life objectives and fulfill their monetary needs (Daniel, 2015 as cited by Kumar, (2016). Career choice also refers to a decision to engage in a business or venture that offers a better, more satisfied, and/or more honourable life (Borchert, 2002) as cited by (Balyer & Özcan, 2014).

Career choice is a mixture of two components: *career* and *choice*. To understand the notion of career choice, one must first study these components. Each component should be seen at an individual level, and they have therefore been previously defined in the definition section. Moreover, the studies of Goffman (2017) and Hughes (1937) also feature Career as their main theme.

Swanson and Gore (2000) claimed that socio-cultural factors work as limitations on career and have significant influence on the career selection processes. These socio-cultural factors include personal and cultural values, social relations, and other physical and organizational factors. All these factors act as barriers and prohibit a person from selecting a certain career. By reviewing previous studies on career choice, it was found that the main determinants of career choice are individual characteristics, family impact, and environmental and social factors.

Families, schools, universities, and other social institutes also play a vital role because all these factors are interconnected. When choosing a career, fiscal and socio-economic factors are also important (Sarwar & Azmat, 2013). The studies mentioned below show how political and economic changes and socio-cultural values influence career choices. Bai (1998) investigates university graduates, who demonstrated a preference for money and power over societal interest. Bai (1998) argued that the primary motivational factors for fresh graduate students are monetary.

The selection of a career depends on one's background, characteristics, abilities, competencies, and many other factors that make one unique to others. Shaffer (2002), argued that human development is a continuous development process, meaning that one is always learning something new in every second of life. Different people deal with and interpret the same event differently, even events with the same characteristics, and these differences makes each person unique. Career choice is a multifaceted natural phenomenon, and different scholars and experts have vastly different opinions on career choice.

TPB asserted the relationship of attitude and intentions. Ajzen (1985) developed a significant direct relation between attitude and intentions and tested it in number of studies (Ajzen, 1991, 2005). Previous literature also supports this relationship between attitude and intentions (CC and EWP) (Hai, Hai, Dung, & Hens, 2010; Othman & Ishak, 2009; Park & Sangeun, 2018; Pihie, 2009; Rajagopal, Rehill, & Godfrey, 2004; Richardson, 2009; Shima & Mohamadali, 2017; Watt & Richardson, 2007). Hence, this study proposed the relationship of CC and EWP, on the basis of previous studies and TPB.

Proposition one: career choice has a significant relationship with employee willingness to perform.

Employee Willingness to Perform

The concept of willingness is derived from the word "will". Smith and McLaughlin (2004) combined will with motivation to see whether employees are effective or not. A number of researchers have previously defined employee engagement, especially vigour, as willingness (Ariani, 2013; Kahn, 1990; Little & Little, 2006; Macey & Schneider, 2008; Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Menguc, Auh, Fisher, & Haddad, 2013; Perrin, 2003; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006).

Robinson (2007) separated employees into three categories: (1) Employees who are willing to perform, who work with passion and feel a profound connection with their organization. (2) Employees who are not willing to performing, who do not make any active contribution to the success of their organization and who put only time, not energy nor passion, into their work. (3) Employees who are actively unwilling to perform, who are not just unhappy in their workplace but also act out their unhappiness and negatively impact the performance of those employees who are more willing to perform.

According to Kerns (2014), employees who are actively unwilling to perform present challenges for managerial leadership. In 2016, approximately 68% of employees in the United States were disengaged (not willing to perform) (Mann & Harter, 2016). Disengaged employees (employees who are not willing to perform) do not contribute to their organization

and decreased the performance of other, more willing employees (Anitha, 2014; Purcell, 2014). Globally, millions of employees demonstrate disengagement (unwillingness to perform) Shuck and Herd (2012), and managers continue to seek methods to improve employees' willingness to perform (Cole, Walter, Bedeian, & O'Boyle, 2012; He, Zhu, & Zheng, 2014). Managers understand that employees' willingness to perform contributes to increased levels of performance, behaviours that promote organizational success, and an overall sense of wellbeing (Hakanen & Schaufeli, 2012; Lowe, 2012). Those employees who are more willing to perform, contribute more significantly to organizational success.

Othman, Mahmud, Noranee, and Noordin (2018) conducted research on teachers of different universities in Malaysia. They found that employee willingness is a predictor of employee happiness. They used regression analysis to analyse their results, and their results indicate that employee willingness has a positive and significant effect on employee happiness. This study was conducted in different universities across Malaysia; however, there is a need to investigate the impact of employee willingness on teachers from different universities, in different countries with other variables.

Crawford, LePine, and Rich (2010), examined the relationship between job demands-resources and willingness to perform and burnout on the basis of inconsistent results concerning these two variables. The researchers proposed a differentiated job demands-resources model, and their results support a refined and updated theory. First, demands and burnout are positively associated; however, resources and burnout are negatively associated with willingness to perform. Resources and willingness to perform are highly dependent on the nature of the demands. As per past literature, demands tend to be an appraisal hindrance and were negatively associated with willingness to perform. Similarly, demands tend to be challenges positively associated with willingness to perform. The above-mentioned study did not examine the underlying mechanisms that link job resources and demand to employee willingness and burnout. Hence, there is a need for future research to address this issue of job demands-resources, willingness to perform and job burnout by considering the intervening theoretical process. The concept of employee willingness is new and should be studied further.

By keeping in mind the direct, significant relationship between intentions and behaviour, this study proposed a relationship between employee willingness to perform and employee effectiveness. The findings of Chen and Silverthorne (2005) also support this relationship. Chen and Silverthorne (2005) claimed that when the willingness to perform a job increases, the level of performance also increases, which leads to effectiveness. Thus, this study proposed a relationship between EWP and EE.

Proposition two: Employee willingness to perform has a significant impact on employee effectiveness.

Mediating Role of EWP

As discussed earlier, EWP has a significant relationship with EE, as well as with CC and HCM. According to TBP, EWP also significantly mediates between CC, HCM and EE. Preacher and Hayes (2008) claimed that there should be an intervening variable between the predictor and dependent variable. The proposed mediation model used in this study is similar to that suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2008) and is referred to as simple mediation. CC and HCM have indirect, significant effects on EE through EWP, and these relationships can be proposed as:

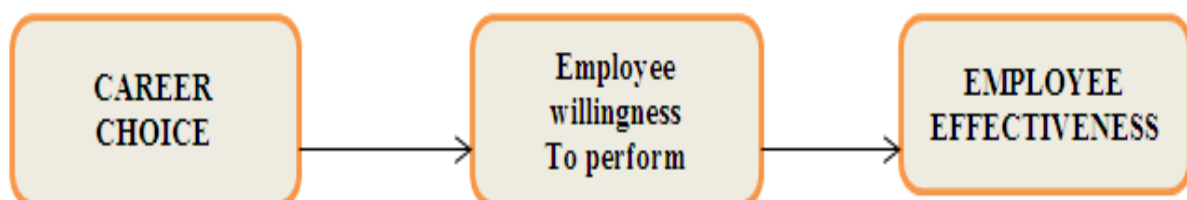
Proposition three: Employee willingness to perform significantly mediates between career choice and employee effectiveness.

Proposition four: Employee willingness to perform significantly mediates between human capital management and employee effectiveness.

Conceptual Framework

After reviewing the extensive literature and theories, the researcher has developed the initial research framework for this study. Literature suggested the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) by Ajzen (1985) to support the main relationships that are proposed for this initial research framework. TPB explained the role of intentions as a mediator between attitude, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991, 2005). This study used attitude as CC, perceived behavioural control as HCM, intentions as EWP, and behaviour as EE, as these have been used by previous researchers (Hai et al., 2010; N. H. Othman & Ishak, 2009; Park & Sangeun, 2018; Pihie, 2009; Rajagopal et al., 2004; Richardson, 2009; Shima & Mohamadali, 2017; Watt & Richardson, 2007).

Figure 1. Conceptual framework: Mediating Role of Employee Willingness to Perform between Career Choice, Human Capital Management and Employee Effectiveness



Methodology

This study highlighted the importance and the mediating role of EWP with the help of TPB. Furthermore, this study explored the most important factors that influence EE in Pakistan. A quantitative approach is proposed by the researcher, one that gathers responses through survey questionnaires.

Conclusion

As mentioned before, the aim of this study is to highlight the importance of employee willingness to perform in public sector universities of Pakistan to make its academicians effective. There are very limited studies available on employee effectiveness, as discussed in the literature section above, but not even a single study viewed employee willingness to perform as a mediator of career choice. Career choice is also an important factor for WTP and EE, but has hitherto been neglected by researchers, especially in Pakistan (Aftab Ahmed, 2014; M. N. Shahzad et al., 2014). Thus, this study provided guidelines to further explore these factors in Pakistan.

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